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Sustainable development: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Letter dated 22 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, for 50 consecutive days, Nicaragua has been experiencing heavy rains, as a result of which entire villages are at risk of being swept away by currents or buried by landslides. Accordingly, the authorities have requested that thousands of people be moved to temporary shelters.

As a result of the rains, 800 km of country roads have become impassable, isolating dozens of communities and preventing agricultural produce from being planted in areas affected by this climatic phenomenon. This, in turn, threatens to cause a famine next year.

Considering the phenomenon described in the two paragraphs above and the fact that Nicaragua has still not recovered from the battering it received from Hurricane Felix — which made landfall as a category 5 hurricane, the highest on the Saffir-Simpson scale, causing serious damage to the country's population and infrastructure — on 18 October 2007, the President of the Republic, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, issued Decree No. 99-2007 declaring a national state of disaster throughout the national territory (see annex).

Under Nicaraguan legislation, a national state of disaster is defined as a public emergency situation caused by an event which endangers persons by affecting their lives, health, assets, work or environment and which requires administrative arrangements, decision-making and availability of extra resources to mitigate and control the effects of the disaster.

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In view of the above, I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated under agenda items 54 (c) and 71 (a) of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) María **Rubiales de Chamorro**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 22 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Decree No. 99-2007

The President of the Republic of Nicaragua,

CONSIDERING:

I

That in September and October, Nicaragua experienced three high-intensity weather systems, namely, Hurricane Felix, which made landfall as a category 5 hurricane (the highest on the international Saffir-Simpson scale) and whose impact was felt in the North Atlantic Autonomous Region, followed by heavy rains associated with a band of low pressure and, currently, the area of barometric depression that is affecting the west and centre-north of the country, causing flooding;

II

That the President of the Republic decreed a state of disaster for the North Atlantic Autonomous Region and declared a green alert for the departments of León, Managua, Carazo, Rivas, Nueva Segovia, Madriz, Estelí, Jinotega and Matagalpa and a red and yellow alert for all the municipalities of Chinandega and that, until a few days ago, those alerts were being administered in conformity with the procedure established by law;

III

That the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity, through the Executive Secretariat of the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response (SINAPRED), identified the action that needed to be taken by regional, departmental and municipal governments (COREPRED, CODEPRED and COMUPRED) and sent SINAPRED representatives to the departments and other territories affected;

IV

That the impact of these intense phenomena and the record amounts of rainfall so far this month have caused serious damage to essential infrastructure, particularly the road network owing to landslides, floods and rivers overflowing their banks, to people and their property, and also serious environmental and economic damage, loss of human life and of crops;

V

That article 23 of Act No. 337 establishing the National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response allows the President of the Republic to declare a state of disaster, at the suggestion of the National Committee or on his own initiative, defined as a public emergency situation caused by an event which endangers persons by affecting their lives, health, assets, work or environment and which requires administrative arrangements, decision-making and availability of extra resources to mitigate and control the effects of the disaster;

By virtue of the powers conferred on him by the Political Constitution,

has enacted the following Decree:

Declaration of a state of disaster throughout the national territory

Article 1. A state of disaster is hereby declared throughout the national territory.

Article 2. State ministries and decentralized bodies, within their areas of competence, shall take immediate steps to implement throughout the national territory, in the regions, departments and municipalities affected, programmes that contribute to offsetting the negative effects caused by the collapse of land communications and the destruction of housing and infrastructure, and to adopt measures to restore basic services for the population, and shall undertake reconstruction efforts.

Article 3. State ministries, with the support of the Nicaraguan Territorial Studies Institute (INETER), the Nicaraguan Institute for Urban and Rural Housing (INVUR), the Nicaraguan Institute for Municipal Development (INIFOM), the Emergency Social Investment Fund (FISE), the Nicaraguan Aqueduct and Sewage Company (ENACAL) and other State entities, with funds allocated under the General Budget Act of the Republic and with support sought and obtained from the international community, shall immediately embark on rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes, subprogrammes and projects for the national territory.

Article 4. Regional, departmental and municipal governments shall maintain the Committees for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response in an operational state to ensure that, through coordinated action with the Central Government, appropriate care continues to be provided to evacuated persons who are housed in temporary shelters.

Article 5. The SINAPRED Executive Secretariat, the Civil Defence and other specialized bodies shall continue to ensure that search, rescue and recovery efforts are carried out for the affected population.

Article 6. This Decree shall enter into force as of this date. It shall be published in the Official Gazette.

Done in the city of Managua, Government House, on 18 October 2007.

(*Signed*) Daniel **Ortega Saavedra**
President of the Republic of Nicaragua